

## Coins

# A 'valuable' dollar bill? Don't count on it; it's only a gimmick

By Roger Boye

QUESTIONS from Tribune readers are answered in this week's column.

**Q** — I have a \$1 Federal Reserve note with a picture of Dwight D. Eisenhower pasted over George Washington's portrait. I received it as a gift and am wondering if it has any value to a collector. — J.P., Chicago

**A** — No. Some businessmen attempt to create souvenirs by attaching the pictures of prominent Americans to dollar bills. Most collectors shun such contrivances.

**Q** — In what year did the government experiment with aluminum cents? Are there any of them in circulation today? — S.G., Skokie

**A** — The 1.5 million aluminum cents were dated 1974, but were not put into circulation. Instead, they were produced as test coins, and the mint director loaned a few of them to some lawmakers. About a dozen coins were never returned to her (and are still missing), although one congressman gave his aluminum cent to the Smithsonian Institution. The mint's aluminum coins were melted in 1975.

By the way, some collectors incor-

rectly refer to 1943-dated pennies as "aluminum cents" because of their appearance. They were made with zinc-coated steel because copper was needed for the war.

**Q** — We sold several sterling silver medals at a coin store last week. The clerk weighed our items in troy ounces, rather than just "regular" ounces. Did we get gypped? — P.M., Bloomington

**A** — Gold and silver prices are almost always reported in troy ounces, although the word "troy" is rarely used in casual references. Thus, dealers weigh gold and silver items using troy ounces.

Some hobbyists confuse troy ounces with another (and more popular) system of weights called avoirdupois that is based on a pound containing 16 ounces. There are only 12 troy ounces in a troy pound, and a troy ounce is slightly heavier than an avoirdupois ounce.

*Questions about coins and collecting? Send them to Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.*